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UNCLAS THE HAGUE 000645

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/ENV - JOHN THOMPSON
STATE FOR G, EUR/UBI, EUR/ERA
EPA/OIA

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SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST ON CRISIS IN GLOBAL AGREEMENT TO
PROTECT OZONE LAYER: DUTCH RESPONSE

REF: STATE 51580

1. In response to reftel, Embassy forwarded non-paper and talking points, as well as EPA press release, to contacts in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environment and Agriculture. In addition, Ambassador Sobel left non-paper with Foreign Minister Bot after a meeting on March 9.

2. We followed up with calls on Ms. Tilly Zwartepoorte, head of the Environment Ministry's Climate and Industry division, who will lead the Dutch delegation to the Montreal conference. Zwartepoorte told us she had briefed Environment State Secretary Pieter van Geel, as well as PM's advisor Swartbol and MFA's Director-General for European Cooperation Marnix Krop about the issue in case of high-level phone calls from Washington (we understand the Dutch Embassy in Washington has suggested these points of contact for calls).

3. According to Zwartepoorte, the Dutch, who had been asked by the Irish to take EU leadership on this issue, are moving very cautiously within the EU framework to try to get the EU countries on one line, which would be acceptable to the U.S. She noted that the Dutch are working hard to reach a compromise agreement. Intensive negotiations have been held in Brussels over the past few days and will continue next week.

4. Although Zwartepoorte did not want to give us any hard information about the Dutch position prior to the Montreal meeting (partly in view of its cautious maneuvering within the EU and partly because the real negotiations will take place in Montreal), she did raise two points important to the Dutch: (a) There is uncertainty about the methyl bromide reserves in the U.S. How much does the U.S. have and what will it do with them?; and (b) Although the Dutch want to find an opening for an agreement on the longer term, they want to have a concrete commitment from the U.S. about how it intends to phase out its use.

5. Zwartepoorte also noted things had moved higher up the political ladder. Embassy informed her we had provided Washington with phone numbers of both Swartbol and Krop.

6. Environment State Secretary Van Geel will probably not go to the Montreal meeting, because he will have to defend his budget in the Senate on March 23. The Dutch delegation, headed by Zwartepoorte, will include three of her staff, including Marjan van Giezen, who has been leading the Dutch delegation so far, and a Foreign Ministry representative.

7. Embassy's AG Counselor Roger Wentzel was informed by his contacts that the Dutch Agricultural Ministry is not involved in the discussion.

Sobel